



Hertford College Freedom of Speech Policy

Free speech is the lifeblood of a university. It enables the pursuit of knowledge. It helps us approach truth. It allows students, teachers and researchers to become better acquainted with the variety of beliefs, theories and opinions in the world. Recognizing the vital importance of free expression for the life of the mind, a university may make rules concerning the conduct of debate but should never prevent speech that is lawful.

Inevitably, this will mean that members of the college are confronted from time to time with views that some find unsettling, extreme or offensive. The college must therefore foster freedom of expression within a framework of robust civility. Not all theories deserve equal respect. A university values expertise and intellectual achievement as well as openness. But, within the bounds set by law, all voices or views which any member of our community considers relevant should be given the chance of a hearing. Wherever possible, they should also be exposed to evidence, questioning and argument. As an integral part of this commitment to freedom of expression, we will take steps to ensure that all exchanges happen peacefully, with appropriate regulation of the time, place and manner of events. Neither speakers nor listeners should have any reasonable grounds to feel intimidated or concerned, and any who do should consult the college Harassment Code (available from the Academic Office).

It is this understanding of the central importance and specific roles of free speech in a university that underlies all the detailed procedures of the University of Oxford/Hertford College. The college adheres to the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

last revised 29/10/18